

Claims

[c1] An automotive door trim assembly, comprising:

- an interior door trim panel adapted to be secured to an automobile door;
- an access opening formed in said door trim panel and sized to facilitate the installation and servicing of door accessories within the interior of the automobile door;
- a plurality of first connecting members disposed on said door trim panel, proximate said access opening;
- an access panel slidably coupled to said door trim panel, proximate said access opening, for movement between a first position wherein said access panel is removable from said door trim panel to expose said access opening, and a second position wherein said access panel is secured to said door trim panel and covers said access opening; and
- a plurality of second connecting members disposed on said access panel, said second connecting members slidably engaging said first connecting members when said access panel is moved in a direction parallel to a surface of said door trim panel to thereby retain said access panel on said door trim panel.

- [c2] The door trim assembly of claim 1, wherein said first connecting members are integrally formed with said door trim panel.
- [c3] The door trim assembly of claim 1, wherein said second connecting members are integrally formed with said access panel.
- [c4] The door trim assembly of claim 1, wherein said first and second connecting members comprise respective interlocking portions that cooperate to positively lock said access panel in said second position.
- [c5] The door trim assembly of claim 4, wherein said interlocking portions include detents formed on one of said first and second connecting members.
- [c6] The door trim assembly of claim 1, further comprising a sealing member disposed between said door trim panel and said access panel, proximate said access opening.
- [c7] The door trim assembly of claim 6, wherein said sealing member is carried on said access panel.
- [c8] The door trim assembly of claim 6, wherein said sealing member is carried on said door trim panel.
- [c9] The door trim assembly of claim 1, further comprising an armrest supported on said access panel.

- [c10] The door trim assembly of claim 1, wherein said access panel further comprises:
 - a peripheral edge circumscribing said access panel; and
 - a flange extending outwardly from said access panel, proximate at least a portion of said peripheral edge.
- [c11] The door trim assembly of claim 10, further comprising:
 - a second connecting member formed on said flange.
- [c12] An automotive door assembly, comprising:
 - a door frame adapted to be hingedly mounted to an automobile;
 - an exterior door panel coupled to said door frame; and
 - an interior door trim assembly coupled to said door frame, generally opposite said exterior door panel, and comprising:
 - an interior door trim panel,
 - an access opening formed in said door trim panel and sized to facilitate the installation and servicing of door accessories within the interior of the automotive door assembly,
 - a plurality of first connecting members disposed on said door trim panel, proximate said access opening,
 - an access panel slidably coupled to said door trim panel, proximate said access opening, for movement between a first position wherein said access panel is removable

from said door trim panel to expose said access opening, and a second position wherein said access panel is secured to said door trim panel and covers said access opening, and

a plurality of second connecting members disposed on said access panel, said second connecting members slidably engaging said first connecting members when said access panel is moved in a direction parallel to a surface of said door trim panel to thereby retain said access panel on said door trim panel.

- [c13] A method of securing an access panel proximate an opening in an interior door trim panel, comprising:
 - positioning the access panel proximate the opening;
 - sliding the access panel relative to the door trim panel, generally along a direction parallel to a planar surface of the door trim panel; and
 - engaging connectors on the access panel with corresponding connectors on the door trim panel while sliding the access panel relative to the door trim panel.
- [c14] The method of claim 13, further comprising:
 - sliding the access panel relative to the door trim panel to disengage the connectors on the access panel from the connectors on the door trim panel; and
 - moving the access panel relative to the door trim panel to expose the opening in the door trim panel.

